



## OFFICE OF RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marc Elrich  
County Executive

Tiffany Ward  
Director and Chief Equity Officer

### MEMORANDUM

November 2, 2023

To: Jennifer Bryant, Director  
Office of Management and Budget

From: Tiffany Ward, Director  
Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice 

Re: Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) Special Appropriation (SA) #24-24  
Emergency Connectivity Fund Grant, \$22,784,400

- I. **FINDING:** The Office of Racial Equity and Social Justice (ORESJ) finds that *Special Appropriation #24-24 Emergency Connectivity Fund Grant* will likely advance racial equity and social justice in the County. This funding will continue to target resources to low-income residents, who are most burdened by the digital divide, by increasing access to computers to provide for educational needs to close the homework gap.
  
- II. **BACKGROUND:** The purpose of SA#24-24 – Emergency Connectivity Fund (ECF) is to purchase 60,000 computers for residents who do not have access to a computer sufficient for their educational needs. The County received this federal funding through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to purchase and distribute computers for low-income residents. The Emergency Connectivity Fund grant program, managed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), aims to help schools and libraries provide the tools and services their communities need for remote learning during the COVID-19 emergency.<sup>1</sup> According to the FCC, the funding can support off-campus learning, such as nightly homework, and summer online learning programs to ensure students nationwide have the necessary support to keep up with their education.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Communications Commission. Emergency Connectivity Fund. Available at: <https://www.fcc.gov/emergencyconnectivity-fund>.

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-396308A1.pdf>.

Computers will be provided for residents who certify that they would not have access to a computer sufficient for their educational needs if the County did not provide them with a computer. Residents must also have a Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) card to participate in the program.<sup>3</sup> Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions (TEBS) will purchase and distribute the computers on behalf of MCPL.

III. **ANALYSIS:** ORESJ has previously analyzed the ECF program in REIA #22-94, *Montgomery Connects Computer Grant Funding*. Montgomery Connects is the County's digital equity and inclusion program. The ECF funding was used to purchase 40,048 computers for distribution to low-income households through the Computer for You program. The REIA examined the funding's ability to reduce opportunity and achievement gaps in education, such as the Homework Gap. ORESJ also expanded its review of the digital divide and the Montgomery Connects program in REIA 23-105 *Digital Equity Grant*, which reviewed numerous State and Federal awards to purchase computers and expand connectivity for low-income households. Our complete analysis can be found in the following.

- 1) REIA 22-94 Montgomery Connects Computer Grant Funding  
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/22-94.pdf>
- 2) REIA 23-105 Digital Equity Grant  
<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ore/Resources/Files/23-105.pdf>

cc: Gail Roper, Director, Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions  
Anita Vassallo, Director, Montgomery County Public Libraries  
Ken Hartman, Director, Strategic Partnerships, Office of the County Executive

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<sup>3</sup> Available at: [https://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgportalapps/Press\\_Detail.aspx?Item\\_ID=44137](https://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgportalapps/Press_Detail.aspx?Item_ID=44137).